

Message Text

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ACTION EA-13

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2566

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COMUSSAG

C O N F I D E N T I A L PHNOM PENH 8413

LIMDIS

SAIGON PLEASE PASS SIR ROBERT THOMPSON

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: PINS, CB

SUBJ: SIR ROBERT THOMPSON'S VISIT TO PHNOM PENH

1. SIR ROBERT THOMPSON USED THE OPPORTUNITY OF HIS FACT-FINDING VISIT TO PHNOM PENH AUGUST 11-12 TO MAKE A USEFUL AND TIMELY EFFORT TO SHORE UP GKR CONFIDENCE ON THE EVE OF THE CESSATION OF U.S. AIR SUPPORT. IN CALLS ON PRESIDENT LON NOL, PRIME MINISTER IN TAM, FANK COMMANDER IN CHIEF MG SOSTHENE FERNANDEZ, HIGH POLITICAL COUNCIL MEMBER SIRIK MATAK, AND MINISTER OF SOCIAL ACTION AND REFUGEES LOEUNG NAL AND AT LUNCH WITH THE MINISTERS OF DEFENSE AND INTERIOR, SIR ROBERT EXCHANGED HIS ANALYSIS OF THE CAMBODIAN WAR FOR THAT OF EACH OF HIS HOSTS. IN EVERY CASE HE STRESSED THE NEED AT THIS CRITICAL STAGE FOR RESOLUTE AND COURAGEOUS LEADERSHIP, FOR POLITICAL UNITY AS WELL AS SOLID POLITICAL SUPPORT
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FOR FANK, AND FOR PROMPT EXPLOITATION OF RECENT ENEMY

MILITARY SETBACKS AND DISUNITY IN THE ENEMY'S RANKS.

2. SIR ROBERT FOUND SOSTHENE FERNANDEZ IMPRESSIVE AND CONFIDENT. IN TAM WAS VAGUE AND DISPIRITED. WHEN THE PRIME MINISTER IMPLICITLY AND HIS ALLY LOEUNG NAL EXPLICITLY ADVOCATED REDUCTION OF THE MILITARY ROLE AND SEPARATION OF PACIFICATION EFFORT FROM FANK, SIR ROBERT SAID HE FRANKLY THOUGHT SUCH A COURSE TO BE UNREALISTIC AT THE PRESENT JUNCTURE. OWING TO THE ENEMY'S MAIN FORCE OFFENSIVE AGAINST THE CAPITAL, MILITARY OPERATIONS, IN HIS VIEW, MUST PERFORCE BE GIVEN THE PREDOMINANT ROLE IN THIS STAGE OF THE WAR. THEY LISTENED IMPASSIVELY TO HIS SUGGESTION THAT THE CIVIL POPULATION BE ENCOURAGED TO GIVE FANK MORE SUPPORT.

3. IN SIR ROBERT'S MEETING WITH LON NOL AUGUST 12, WHICH LASTED MORE THAN AN HOUR, LON NOL SPENT THE GREATER PART OF THE TIME EMPHASIZING HIS NEED FOR FOREIGN EXPERTS TO ASSIST HIM IN THE MANAGEMENT OF MILITARY AFFAIRS AND HIS CONTINUING REQUIREMENT FOR EXTERNAL ASSISTANCE, PARTICULARLY FROM SUCH NEIGHBORS AS SOUTH VIETNAM AND THAILAND. IN NEITHER CASE, HOWEVER, DID HE SPECIFY REQUIREMENTS BUT REFERRED INSTEAD TO THE NEED FOR A COMMON FRONT AGAINST NORTH VIETNAMESE EXPANSIONISM IN SOUTHEAST ASIA. HE SPOKE MORE IN SORROW THAN IN ANGER OF THE REPERCUSSIONS ON NEIGHBORING GOVERNMENTS SHOULD THEY FAIL TO COME TO THE AID OF THE REPUBLIC IN ITS HOUR OF NEED. FOR HIS PART, SIR ROBERT INDICATED PLAINLY THAT THE REPUBLIC AND ITS ARMED FORCES MUST NOW BEAR THE PRINCIPAL BURDEN OF DEFENSE AND THAT THE TIME WAS NOW AT HAND WHEN A MAXIMUM EFFORT MUST BE MADE ON BOTH THE MILITARY AND POLITICAL FRONTS.

4. IF HIS SCHEDULE AND CIRCUMSTANCES HERE PERMIT, SIR ROBERT PLANS TO MAKE ANOTHER QUICK VISIT TO PHNOM PENH AUGUST 18-19, AT WHICH TIME WE WILL PROVIDE HIM OUR ASSESSMENT OF THE SITUATION AS IT THEN STANDS. HE HAS ALSO ASKED TO MEET AGAIN WITH PRIME MINISTER IN TAM
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AND MAJOR GENERAL SOSTHENE FERNANDEZ.
SWANK

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NNN

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